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FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE SOUNDS ALARM ON MASS RELEASE OF CONVICTED CRIMINALS IN DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Patrick Yoes, National President of the Fraternal Order of Police, sounded the alarm on the decisions in the District of Columbia and other jurisdictions to release offenders without any process or assessment for the safety of the public.

“This is a fearful time and I understand that people are afraid, but we cannot allow fear to rule our decisions, and the decision to empty a prison without knowing the potential public safety implication is very dangerous both to our officers and the public at large,” Yoes said.

Jurisdictions like the District of Columbia are releasing convicted offenders in large numbers because they are afraid the correctional facilities may become COVID-19 “hotspots.” These mass releases are justified by assuring the public that those released are “nonviolent offenders,” but this cannot be true in every case because there is no risk assessment.

“Who are these offenders? In the District of Columbia, they include violent criminals convicted of offenses involving vicious and armed assaults and domestic abusers. Incredibly, they also include at least one individual convicted of assaulting a police officer!” Yoes said. “These criminals will be flooding the streets at a time when law enforcement personnel are stretched very thin. The D.C. government seems to be totally oblivious to the fact that our law enforcement and correctional officers are working without even the most rudimentary personal protective equipment. They are more at risk than these convicted offenders from the virus.”

Yoes applauded Timothy Shea, Interim U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, who recently took court action to oppose the release and said that “the rule of law must be maintained.” Mr. Shea expressed particular concern about domestic abusers who would be sheltering, in many cases, with their victims.

“Without a review process, risk assessment and timely notification, it is the height of irresponsibility to release criminals into the current environment,” Yoes concluded.

The Fraternal Order of Police is the largest law enforcement labor organization in the United States, with more than 350,000 members.

